



World AIDS Day



December 1, 2005, marks the 18th annual World AIDS Day taking as its theme “Keep the Promise, Stop AIDS.” The five-year, Global AIDS Campaign for 2005-2010 aims to hold the world community accountable to the commitments they make to ensure a comprehensive response to the epidemic. The focus is not only on individuals, the private sector, and the public, but also on governments and policy makers to continue prevention efforts, reduce stigma, build health infrastructures, and ensure treatment, care, and respect for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Although new and effective combination drug therapies have resulted in declines in the number of AIDS-related deaths in the United States, the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to be one of the most serious public health threats facing the world today. According to UNAIDS estimates, worldwide, there are almost 40 million people now infected with HIV, 50 percent of whom are women.

As of September 30, 2005, there were 138,334 cumulative AIDS cases reported in California representing over 16 percent of all reported AIDS cases in the United States. Nearly 80,500 Californians have died and over 100,000 people are currently living with HIV and AIDS. Although White men who have sex with men continue to represent the greatest number of reported HIV/AIDS cases, recent data indicates that the proportion of new cases among people of color, injection drug users and their sex partners, and women, especially African American women and Latinas, is increasing.

California is “keeping the promise,” by providing significant resources and services for HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment. Among the many services provided are 175,000 HIV tests performed annually at publicly-funded clinics, and 29,000 HIV-positive citizens of California are benefiting from one of the largest and most comprehensive AIDS Drug Assistance Programs in the United States. The California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS (OA) is positioned at the forefront of the battle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic and is working with its statewide partners (community-based organizations, county-based local health jurisdictions, universities, and other governmental agencies) to prevent new infections and to assist those infected and affected by HIV.

Please take some time on World AIDS Day to educate yourself about HIV/AIDS. If you are at-risk, getting tested for HIV, learning your HIV status, and using condoms remain some of the strongest prevention tools in the battle against HIV/AIDS. For information on OA’s mission, programs, and other helpful resources, see OA’s Website at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/AIDS>.

